

March 4, 2025

Statement Condemning Repression and Criminalization of Free Speech on Campus

As CSUSM faculty, lecturers, librarians, and staff we denounce the current administration's efforts to criminalize, penalize, and target student activists, and activism in general, on our campus. [On February 20, 2025](#), students staged a series of nonviolent direct actions to disrupt the Social Mobility Symposium, on our campus, as part of their campaign to declare CSUSM a sanctuary campus. Ironically, this symposium was organized to "advance social mobility and develop solutions that empower students." Instead, our campus was hyper-militarized and super-surveilled through an increased police presence, with the calling in of officers from neighboring campuses and precincts, as well as private security forces.

One week later, on Friday, February 28, student leaders and organization presidents received individual and organizational referrals and summons to disciplinary hearings from the Dean of Students Office and the Student Leadership and Involvement Center, in direct reference to this day of action. Furthermore, a student worker received a phone call to notify them that due to their involvement in the protest, their on-campus position had been terminated and that they could no longer participate in their on-campus internship. Not only were current students targeted, but community members were also targeted by this administrative overreach- perhaps an attempt to obstruct and retaliate against future aspirations of graduate study. Nonetheless, these obvious punitive acts of retaliation on our students are disgraceful, and must be investigated as violations of our students' campus and constitutional rights. These disciplinary actions make CSUSM the first campus in the CSU system to take such aggressive action towards this many students and organizations at once. Furthermore, these actions go against CSUSM's Diversity, Social Justice & Equity values which highlight the "strive for the realization of educational equity and the promoting of a fair and open environment for the respectful exchange of ideas."

Using campus and CSU-wide policies – namely Time, Place, Manner and Student Code of Conduct – to intimidate and retaliate against regional partners, students, and organizations is atrocious and sets a dangerous precedent for protected rights to free speech, protest, and assembly across our campuses. Engaging in nonviolent, civil disobedience is a long tradition on college campuses, including CSUSM, and is a clear example of education in action. The implementation of policies such as Time, Place, Manner and Student Code of Conduct come in the wake of nation-wide repression and crackdowns against other marginalized communities. In this moment of political repression and escalating authoritarianism, CSUSM should be celebrating our students for engaging in the courageous act of speaking out on behalf of marginalized communities. It is disgraceful that our campus has decided to mobilize its resources for these ends, particularly when CSUSM touts itself as a leader in social mobility. These actions are egregious and seemingly antithetical to CSUSM's professed commitment to, "*respond to societal needs and prepare students to be tomorrow's socially just leaders and change makers*" (CSUSM Strategic Plan). These students *are* the socially just leaders and change makers we are trying to prepare; we are watching them in real time mobilize their CSUSM education and training to stand up to nefarious

attacks on free speech and the denigration of their undocumented classmates and the larger regional community.

We call on Dean of Students Jason Schreiber, Director of Student Engagement & Leadership Tony Pang, Vice President of Student Affairs Viridiana Diaz, President Ellen Neufeldt, and all other administrative officers involved in these repressive efforts, to immediately drop these disciplinary processes, and instead commit to restoring all the rights and academic standings that these students and organizations enjoyed before February 20, 2025. We compel the campus administration to continue working with students in good faith to meet their demands that they have presented in previous deliberations. These draconian measures from our own administration directly contradict stated promises to prioritize student success and wellbeing, and only further demonstrate the urgency of student demands. Students are asking the campus to commit to their safety and security, centering undocumented and mixed-status students. Instead, our administration is choosing to threaten our students' well-being, livelihood, and education. In this light, any public declarations to make CSUSM a safe place for all students ring hollow in the face of institutional sanctions for speaking out against injustice. Seals of Excelencia, HSI declarations, social mobility awards, and professed commitments to “cultures of care” are farcical when students are under attack. CSUSM, align your practices with your values by halting all disciplinary processes against our students now and commit to upholding the infrastructure of care and protection that our students deserve now more than ever.

Sincerely,
CSUSM UndocuAllies